

**CITY OF WARREN PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MARCH 5, 2013**



The meeting was called to order at 4:35 PM on March 5, 2013. Members present were: Dennis Crandall, Jackie Angove, Ben Johnson, Kirk Johnson, Todd Ristau, Judi Wilson, and Mark Zavinski. Also attending were Mike Holtz, DPW Director; Mary Ann Nau, City Administrator; and Teena Leary, Executive Secretary.

**VISITORS**

Jacob Perryman – Warren Times Observer

**CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence to come before the Commission.

**REVIEW OF PARK PROPERTIES**

In anticipation of upcoming meetings of the City Council Committee tasked with reviewing and making recommendations regarding City-owned properties, the Commission continued its February 5 discussions regarding park properties.

Mr. Crandall noted that in a prior review by the Commission the recommendation was made to release both Clemons Park and the passive park area located on Water Street at the terminus of Fourth Avenue.

The following items were discussed:

1. Ms. Nau indicated that she spoke with a member of the Elks Club to determine if the Club might have interest in leasing **Clemons Park**. The park is located directly across Hickory Street from the Club and has been utilized by the Elks in conjunction with Club events. The member questioned whether the Club would bear any liability beyond mowing the property. The matter will be brought forth at the March meeting of the Elks Club Board. Mr. Holtz noted that in the past picnic tables and benches have been placed in Clemons Park. In response to Mrs. Wilson's question, Ms. Nau indicated that deed covenants require that this property be returned to the heirs of the donors should the use not conform to the covenant.
2. Mr. Holtz stated that some time ago City Council received a viable proposal from an individual regarding acquisition of the "**Fourth Avenue Park**" located on Water Street at the foot of Fourth Avenue, however, a sale did not occur. Mr. Holtz noted that this property is not suitable as a building lot as there are underground utilities throughout the property including natural gas transmission facilities. Mr. Ristau suggested that the property be sold to Columbia Fuel Gas. Mr. K. Johnson indicated that he spoke with an adjoining property owner who stated that they have no interest in acquiring the property.
3. Mr. Zavinski noted that **Boulevard Park's** location in the center of Fourth Avenue creates a narrow travel lane in the Avenue when cars are parked at the curb. He further noted that many residents utilize the area for the deposit of yard debris. Mr. Holtz stated that this activity has been significantly reduced in recent years.
4. Mrs. Wilson indicated that a resident in the area of **Levee Park** stated that they mow

the area. Mr. Holtz stated that this park is a “green space with a purpose.”

5. Mr. Crandall questioned whether the Lacy Foundation should be aiding in the care of **Lacy Park**. Ms. Nau suggested that needs be identified and a request be submitted to the Foundation. She further noted that the Foundation has expanded its purpose to include additional parks. Mr. Zavinski stated that the bocce courts are overgrown with weeds and are unusable. Mr. Holtz indicated that the Department of Public Works would evaluate the condition of the courts to determine if they should be removed. Mr. Crandall stated that the ball field infield has grown to all grass. The ballfield is utilized by the Little League which assists with maintenance of the field during the ball season.
6. Mr. Holtz stated that **Liberty Mall Park** is a remnant from the former Parking Authority and provides pedestrian access between Liberty Street and the Midtown Parking Lot. Ms. Nau noted that the park has been the beneficiary of an Eagle Scout project in which a great deal of brick work was completed to enhance the park. She further noted that the plantings were recently addressed and five statues created by local elementary students are located in this park.
7. Mr. Zavinski noted that the Garden Club maintains the garden in **Wetmore Park** and questioned whether the garden might be moved to another park location. He also questioned what restrictions there might be on the property use as it is located within the Historic District. Ms. Nau responded that City staff would need to review this matter. She also noted that the deed contains a reverter clause to heirs.
8. Ms. Nau stated that the City has received correspondence from an adjoining property owner with interest in purchasing a City-owned parcel located in the upper portion of **Mulberry Park** and which is located in Glade Township. The prospective buyer also wishes to acquire a right-of-way which is located between the individual's property and the parcel proposed for purchase. Ms. Nau stated that it is essential that the City maintain an easement into Mulberry Park which could be accomplished via Phillips Street or Glade Avenue. Mr. Holtz described the parcel of interest as having a steep slope and being tree covered. Commission members noted the following concerns:
  - a. If the trees were to be cut, the additional runoff would increase the existing drainage issues on the hillside and would negatively impact the park land as well as adjoining properties.
  - b. As the property is located in Glade Township, it would be subject to the Township/County zoning regulations and the City would have no recourse should it be put to a use that negatively impacted properties and park lands located downhill from the parcel.
  - c. Mr. Ristau noted that as the City does not incur maintenance costs for this parcel and, therefore, the short-term gain from a sale may not be worthwhile.

Also relative to Mulberry Park, it was noted that the hillside was once a popular sled riding location; however, drainage issues have resulted in ponding at the base of the slope.

9. Mr. Crandall questioned whether the Karen Bonnell Field (**Crescent Park**) is utilized and suggested that it be relocated to Betts Park as an improved ball field in the area adjacent to the bocce court. This would allow the area in Crescent Park to be utilized for a community garden.

10. Ms. Nau stated that she received an inquiry regarding the cost to retain a Summer Playground Program at **DeFrees Playground** for 2013. The caller expressed an interest in providing financial support for continuation of the program. Ms. Nau stated that she also received an inquiry from the Chief Cornplanter Boy Scout Office regarding assumption of stewardship of DeFrees Playground in exchange for use of the park for Boy Scout training programs.
11. Mr. K. Johnson noted that he has observed a great deal of graffiti on the pavilion located in **Morck Park**. Mr. Holtz indicated that the electric service for lighting the "Welcome to Warren" sign located on the bank of the park would be sufficient to provide service to the pavilion as well. Ms. Nau suggested that this park might be well-suited to an outdoor fitness area due to its proximity to the Warren County Bike/Hike Trail.
12. Mr. Holtz stated that **Point Park** is essentially a flood plain and requires a "fair amount" of maintenance. He noted that the area is in better condition than in the past and brush has been removed from much of it. Mr. K. Johnson reminded Commission members of the kiosk to be placed as part of a Leadership Warren County Group Project. The kiosk will provide information regarding the Conewango Creek Watershed and will be constructed of graffiti-resistant material.
13. Ms. Nau noted that another Leadership Warren County Group is working on a trail project at **Washington Park**. Mrs. Wilson indicated that the D.A.R. (Daughters of the American Revolution) continues to work on restoration of the entrance sign.
14. Several potential/proposed trail projects were discussed including the area running adjacent to the Allegheny River behind the Transit Authority/Allegheny Community Center building on Clark Street, the Pennsylvania Avenue Parkway, and along the Allegheny River Levee to proceed under the Route 6 Bypass to Betts Park. Ms. Nau indicated that it may be possible to have a representative of Warren County attend a future meeting to discuss the Warren County Greenways Plan.
15. Ms. Nau reported that a Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) grant application proposal will be presented to City Council at their March meeting. The grant application would be for partial funding for the rehabilitation of facilities at the Municipal Pool.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Crandall declared the meeting adjourned.